



Tom Pacheco **"Rebel Spring"** Frog's Claw Records

Pacheco's approach to composition is unique in the world of song poets; one minute his lyrics are frank and factual reproductions of real life events – many of them personal. Then, in a flash, Tom will take you on a journey into the world of *"What if?"* the results of which sound so genuine that the boundaries between veracity and fantasy become blurred. Examples of both approaches feature on this new release. A Woodstock resident [once again] these past eight years, **"Rebel Spring"** is the fourth Pacheco album to be produced by Band alumni, Jim Weider.

Subjectively, **"Rebel Spring"** is Pacheco's darkest collection ever, a reflection of the troubled times we live in. The economies of the planet's major nations balance precariously on a knife-edge, cataclysmic climatic changes are becoming apparent across the planet, lawlessness and disorder reign, foreign wars are launched upon a whim, while in the Western world the family unit is disintegrating.....it's time to wake up and smell the roses.

The album title track and opening cut is both a call to arms *"Somewhere, we lost the reins of our destiny"* and a prayer for the return to an America where fairness and honesty were rigid ethical benchmarks. The latter lyric mentions *"the sweet songs of the shepherds we can't see,"* "sweet" being sarcasm, while the shepherd is not good but bad. The same evil character surfaces among *"the fools who sent him there"* in "God And Flag And Country," and recounts the homecoming of an American soldier slain in a foreign land. Penned by the dead soldier and subsequently scattered by the desert wind, the goose bump image in this lyric is of *"an unmailed letter"* with *"bloodstains on the pages"* that *"no one will read at all."*

"North Dakota" was inspired by the November 2003 [*] disappearance of student Dru Sjodin. Following conversations with Ramblin' Jack Elliott and Pete Seeger, Pacheco, the historian, created "Woody And Jack" a snapshot of Guthrie's final east to west road trip across America during 1954 [accompanied by Elliott]. Already in the initial grip of Huntington's Chorea, as this part factual, part fictional tale evolves Guthrie disappears for a period of six weeks. Once found Woody is taken east to begin the final, thirteen year long phase of his life an inmate of Brooklyn and New Jersey hospitals. A heartfelt lyric, "Uncle Joe" also finds himself incarcerated – the resident of an old folks home. The song contains fond recollections from the past and present, delivered by a nephew who obviously dearly loves the old guy. The struggle to exist on minimum wage is the focus of "Six Bucks An Hour," and it's another instance where Pacheco tongue whips the greed of the corporate beast.

The contents of this collection are not totally black. A while back a young neighbour asked Tom to capture in song *"the meaning of life,"* and rising to the challenge "That's What Life Is" is the subjectively uplifting result. With a wink [of an eye] and a broad smile on his face Tom penned "Freida's Secret Garden," the tale of a gracious old lady racked with rheumatism who lives *"up in the mountains."* As a way of gaining relief from the pain, Freida grows and smokes her own. The story line includes visits to her home by the local sheriff - fresh out of cigarettes, and former Attorney General John Ashcroft. While the sheriff ends up *"talking to the tv set"* after smoking some of Freida's finest, Ashcroft gorges on a plate of brownies and proceeds to dance the Macarena. :)

Once upon a time countless mill towns thrived in the States, but in this 21st century corporate world they're mostly gone since manufacturing the same product is now "Cheaper In China." "Winter Lament" is both a love song and a cry for environmental awareness. Maybe it's not that hard to imagine – a

corporate buy out of all the world's [drinking] water resources is the "*What if*" scenario painted in "The Last Drop." Niagara has become a dry cliff, the remains of the Titanic appear above the water as the oceans shrink, and plagues of locusts strip the final remnant of greenery from the Earth - I think you get the idea. A narrative concerning a cherished and historic family heirloom, in "Grandma's Blue Blanket" Pacheco also reflects upon the positives of respect for one's bloodline and heritage, and the negative issue of racial prejudice [during the supposed pious early twentieth century]. The blanket's blue cloth came from the uniforms of US Cavalry soldiers. In the closing track "Not In My Name," Pacheco calls for a return to honest and transparent government, and in the process invokes the name of the eighteenth century English born, American independence pamphleteer and campaigner, Thomas Paine.

Tom's father taught him to play guitar. Tony Pacheco passed away while this recording was being completed. In the liner booklet Tom dedicates this recording to his beloved father, and one of Tony's paintings appears in the liner artwork. Meantime this recording is available on the web in North America from www.cdbaby.com while European readers of Folkwax can purchase the disc from Fair Oaks Entertainment at www.roots2rockmusic.com/rootsalbums.html#P

Note.

[*] – The student's body was eventually found in April 2004. She had been kidnapped and murdered.

Folkwax Rating 9 out of 10

Arthur Wood
Kerrville Kronikles 04/05